



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONVICTED FELON SENTENCED TO 18 MONTHS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR POSSESSION OF A FIREARM

TUCSON – Fredrick Leon Viola, 25, of Coolidge, Ariz., was sentenced here on July 26 to 18 months in federal prison by Chief U.S. District Judge John M. Roll. Viola had pleaded guilty in March to illegal possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

On September 17, 2006, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives agents were monitoring illegal firearm activity in a gun show in Tucson, and uncovered a conspiracy to purchase and illegally transfer firearms to convicted felons. During the investigation of this conspiracy, undercover agents saw Viola pick up and carry a Masterpiece Arms, model MPA10, .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol. This firearm had affected interstate commerce in that it was previously transported into Arizona from another state or foreign country. Court records indicated that Viola was previously convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding a year, that is: Possession of Marijuana, a felony, in Pima County Superior Court of Arizona in January 2005.

Two additional individuals involved in this conspiracy were charged with federal firearms offenses. Ishmael Smith, was already sentenced to serve 33 months in prison for his involvement. Raymond Medina was sentenced to serve 18 months in prison.

Viola's prosecution is part of a specialized enforcement initiative known as the Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCIT) Initiative. The City of Tucson is one of 25 cities nationally that have been targeted for inclusion in this specialized initiative. ATF is the lead federal law enforcement agency, and uses an integrated federal, state and local law enforcement strategy to identify, disrupt, arrest and prosecute the most violent criminals in 25 U.S. cities. The VCIT concept was modeled after the successes of the earlier-developed illegal firearms enforcement program known as Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), with additional ATF resources redirected from across the country to target specific areas that had an unacceptable level of violent crime, particularly firearms related homicides, as compared to the national average.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Tucson Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The prosecution was handled by Jennifer J. Maldonado, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona.

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